

**Meeting of the
Statewide Foster Care Advisory Council
Sheraton Lisle Naperville, 3000 Warrenville Road, Lisle, Illinois
April 12, 2019
9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
MINUTES**

SWFCAC MEMBERS PRESENT	SWFCAC MEMBERS ABSENT	GUESTS Cont'd	STAFF Cont'd
Gladys Boyd	Katy Cotts	Lionel Nzamba	Gwenn Eyer
Arrelida Hall	Donna Gregory	Natalie Pierce	Michael Ferguson
Rachel Hoyt	Gordon Hannon	Greshen Rodriguez	Jen Florent
Ken Keefe	Harriet Kersh	Lavonne Smith	Michelle Grove
Maya Maclin	Susan McConnell	Rebecca Thomas	Gina Linkenheld
Kellye Norris	Kate Monte	Geralyn Walsh	Laticia McAlpine
Rachel Pruess	Mary Savage		Rhonda Laye
Carol Sheley		STAFF	Norma Machay
Denise Spires	GUESTS	Julie Barbosa	Darcy Navarro
Lesley Stuart	Glenn Eyer	Diana Blackburn	Cynthia Richter-Jackson
Samella Taylor-Lewis	Debbie Freke	Dierdra Davis	Veronica Sanchez
Stephanie Tesreau	Robyn Harvey	Mike Deschamps	
	John Lueder	Carlene Erno	

Welcome and Introductions

Carol Sheley

SWFCAC Chairperson Carol Sheley welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:00 a.m. and council members and guests introduced themselves. Carol distributed Prevent Child Abuse wristbands to thank council members for their commitment to children and youth.

Final Report to the Director

Carol Sheley

There were no final reports to the Director. The monthly Director's Report was submitted as required by law.

Approve SWFCAC Minutes from 3/8/19

Kellye Norris made the motion to approve the minutes from the March 8, 2019 SWFCAC meeting. Rachel Hoyt seconded, and the motion carried.

Northern Region Update

Rhonda Laye, Mike Ferguson

Rhonda and Mike welcomed the council to the Northern region and provided a brief update on the work being accomplished in the Northern Region. The region is committed to working as a team with foster parents in rejuvenating the regional council, and they are trying to recruit officers to be involved.

Legislation

Alexia Koziol

Stephanie Tesreau, SWFCAC legislative chair, briefly recapped legislation Alexia provided. For More Information; www.ilga.gov

SB 1743 DCFS Foster Care Survey requires DCFS, in coordination with specified entities, to develop and process a standardized survey to gather feedback from children who are aging out of foster care and from children who have transitioned out of the foster care system.

SB 1790 amends the Statewide Youth Advisory Board Act. It requires the Governor to meet with the SYAB at least two times each State fiscal year in order to discuss the issues and concerns of youth in foster care.

HB Paid Maternity Leave Act creates the Paid Family Leave Act which requires private employers with 50 or more employees to provide six weeks of paid leave for an employee who takes leave: (1) because of the birth of a child of the employee and in order to care for the child; (2) to care for a newly adopted child under 18 years of age or a newly placed foster child under 18 years of age or a newly adopted or newly placed foster child older than 18 years of age if the child is incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability; or (3) to care for a family member with a serious health condition.

HB 2524 DCFS – Payment Rate Increases provides that, for State Fiscal Year 2020, the Department shall increase reimbursement rates payable to each private agency with a purchase of service contract or grant from the Department to an amount that equals the sum of all increases in general inflation during the State Fiscal Years 2014-2018 as determined by the consumer price index-u published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, less any rate increases previously provided by the Department.

Communications

Jen Florent

Jen reminded the council that April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. She announced that Marc D. Smith, formerly of Aunt Martha's, has been appointed DCFS Interim Director. Jassen Strokosch is the new Communications Deputy and his goal is to highlight the great things the Department and families do for children. Jen stated that the fourth annual Legislative Shadow Day is coming up on May 14 and 15. Orientation will be conducted on the 14th to prepare them and they will go to the Capitol on the 15th for Shadow Day. State Fair ticket request forms will be out in May. June 25 is Cardinals Family Day and July 27 is White Sox. The Duquoin State Fair picnic will be held August 24th. Communications uses social media to share information including events like Shadow Day, basketball leagues, job postings, etc. Please share good news and other announcements with Jen for posting on social media.

Be Strong Families

Robyn Harvey

Robyn is the program manager for Be Strong Families. The Strengthening Families program started in 2003. They offer great things for children and families and the council was involved early in program development. This year they have talked to 950 foster parents. Strengthening Families is famous in America for hosting cafés with foster parents, birth parents and professionals. They do more than 100 training events each year. The first Foster Dads Café will

be conducted in Champaign. They focus on shared parenting with caregivers and birth parents, demonstrating the power of teamwork and enabling us to look for better outcomes. They do not track training credit, but credit forms are available on the VTC. Contact Robyn soon to schedule for the next fiscal year.

Permanency Update

Julie Barbosa

Julie introduced herself and noted that she has served as a caseworker, casework supervisor, and has spent five years with ACR. She became the Permanency Deputy in February and is headquartered in the Aurora field office. She noted that her office voice mail has her cell phone number.

Julie stated that if policy does not work, we need to change it, and she welcomes input from council members. (We have to do what is written until it is changed.) What kinds of issues should foster parents take to the deputy? Julie's role is to oversee policy related to permanency including policy changes and practice changes. Caseworkers funnel inquiries up through the region, sometimes via APT and via Regional Administrators. If something is not in line with policy, it goes to Julie. Clinical doesn't make critical decisions. The supervisor on the case makes the decision and may go against the clinical recommendation, even though there may be consequences. From Julie it goes to the Senior Deputy and the Director. Julie directly supervises the Office of Caregiver & Parent Support, the Adoption unit, Incarcerated, and Administrative Case Review.

Discussion:

- According to the Placement Clearance Desk no more than three unrelated children may be placed in the home. (It is on the form, but not in policy.)
- The Family First Act will cause policy change related to licensing to meet their standards.
- They are currently reviewing and developing policy, practice, procedures and forms to do waivers not related to safety. Training will be conducted when policy is changed. Currently, Director waivers may be completed on a provisional basis.
- The Kinship Care issue is clear in policy. If people are not conforming, it needs to go to Julie.
- If it is in policy, that is the way it should be handled.
- Reunification and anything related to permanency goes to Julie.

DCFS Medical Director

Margaret Scotellaro, MD

Margi worked through the Guardian's Consent Line for many years. Dr. Paula Jaudes was her mentor and inspired her to do the work she does now, serving as the DCFS Medical Director. She is a former foster/adoptive parent and does a lot of work with Healthworks and serves as the medical director at The Children's Place. Margi is involved on the medical side with Family First. Hopefully they'll move into comprehensive medical evaluations for intact families. She is on a committee with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

She reported that they are looking at Family First changes from a medical standpoint, hoping to develop a comprehensive medical exam for intact. They are working to encourage pediatricians to be involved with their state legislatures to incorporate Family First. The council should share issues regarding the healthcare for children. Margi recognizes that access is challenging, especially regarding mental health providers.

There seems to be a significant blind spot with regard to nutrition. The Department has a dietitian that works with birth parents, children and foster parents. Margi is willing to work with the nutritionist at Rush to provide training and guidance to foster families and intact families, as needed.

The Department was working with Managed Care to move Healthworks to Illini Care and the dates have continued to be pushed back. There is no current update but it looks like it is going to happen eventually. Council members indicated that families should be able to access a three-day supply of psychotropic meds /medication approval when a youth is discharged from residential. It is being addressed on the Care Oversight Committee with Dr. Naylor. Hospitals need to be aware of the need and procedure to follow in a discharge checklist. Why not allow them to fill the prescription with the provider writing the prescription without going through Guardian approval? If meds are not on the approved list they are refused. Two approvals are in place and people do not know the system. It is very hard for foster parents to schedule appointments around school, parental employment, etc.

The SWFCAC Managed Care Committee was renamed the Medical Care Committee and Rachel Hoyt was renamed the chairperson.

Child & Family Service Plan/Program Improvement Plan Cynthia Jackson-Richter

The federal government provides about one-third of the funding for DCFS. It becomes concerning to them when they provide funds and we do not demonstrate the permanency outcomes they look for. The federal government does a Child & Family Services Review in every state. Illinois had one in 2003, 2008 and another in 2018. When the feds give results, the states are expected to do a deep dive to identify root causes of the problems and make improvements via a Program Improvement Plan. The changes are monitored for two years. Illinois had to do PIPs in 2003 and 2008. At the end of the second time we lost \$4 million funding due to lack of improvement in the area of abuse in out-of-home care and in risk/safety assessment when the state was associated with the family. (The penalty was assessed in 2015.) We had even lower results in 2018.

Reporting includes several parts. The Child & Family Services Review (CFSR) is the central piece. The Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) is our five-year plan. The Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR) is an annual report that responds to progress made in each of the five years. The Outcome Enhancement Review (OER) is our own internal process to review data and set baselines. The Feds help set improvement measures. The Program Improvement Plan (PIP) includes goals and activities to improve outcomes. It is the baseline used to continue to measure. All of these need to be in place by early June.

Cynthia directed the discussion by asking, “What is within the council’s purview?” The council was asked to choose one goal and focus in on it. The council chose to focus on #4 physical, mental health and education. The council decided to concentrate on
Goal #4 – Mental Health: *Effectively meet the needs of children and youth while they are in our purview (investigations, intact) and/or custody by enduring that their parents, relatives, foster*

parents and the communities they live in can provide for their educational, physical health and mental/behavioral health needs.

Discussion:

- Caseworkers need to be aware of the process and the penalties.
- We have to reduce paperwork, reduce caseloads, and allow workers to work more efficiently.
- Take ownership and do what you can where you are.
- Collectively, foster parents have a strong voice.
- Require training on key components.
- Foster parents need to be allowed to make self-referrals to providers they know will accept cases and are known to have the ability to meet the child's needs. We refer to "normalcy" for foster families, but there are barriers.
- We need our children/youth seen by experienced credentialed providers rather than interns, etc.
- Recruit, contract with and raise reimbursement rates to improve the pool of quality providers.
- Do not allow spec agencies to pick and choose which kids they will take.

Next steps: Cynthia will work with us to put together a summary of today's discussion and will be looking for input from the council through Rachel Hoyt, Medical Care committee chair. She will report back to the council.

Education Advocacy

Diane Fitzhugh

Diane is one of the education advisors to DCFS covered through an NIU contract. This is a unique program to provide education advocacy and assist with school enrollment, school fees and funding, early childhood education, academics, special education, behavior, school safety, absenteeism and truancy, suspension or expulsion, alternative education options, Section 504 and post-secondary education. Education Advocates work with children and youth from birth through 26. Post-secondary specialists work with youth all the way through college and upper level degrees. Rule 314 sets education rules for DCFS. ESSA, the Every Student Succeeds Act covers a lot for foster children. Youth in care are not covered under the Homeless Act. Webinars are available and NIU is able to offer a limited number of trainings in private agencies.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Lionel Nzamba, Lifescape

Lionel reported that the number of children being raised by someone other than a parent has increased dramatically over the last 25 years. Nationally, 5.7 million children under the age of 18 are living in grandparent-headed households. 211,919 children under the age of 18 are living in grandparent-headed households in Illinois. Grandparents face challenges, including financial challenges, when taking on this responsibility later in life. The Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program is focused primarily on serving the needs of older adults who are raising a minor child. Agencies across the state offer this program. Trained caseworkers are available to meet with grandparents to assess needs and identify resources, including good and services.

Statewide Youth Advisory Board

Natalie Pierce

The Statewide Youth Advisory Board met March 8-10. Natalie reported that they are on the same page as the SWFCAC. The SYAB has a partnership with Loyola to help youth understand

DCFS policy. It started out with youth asking questions and it ended up with a whole packet of policies being interpreted for youth, with the opportunity for youth to comment. They are working on tips for keeping youth safe in their placements.

Key issues include the following:

- *Education

- *Use of restraints – sometimes resulting in injury in residential placement

- *Homelessness – sometimes youth emancipate, return home or age out and are homeless. Natalie reported that at least 40% of our youth become homeless after leaving care.

- *Teen Parenting

The Therapeutic Residential Performance Management Initiative (TRPMI) is a pilot through the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Illinois. They went to certain residential to collect data from youth residing there. They have inaccurate reports so they are going to examine it further.

They are utilizing LGBTQ surveys to examine services and support for youth in care. They are trying to start an LGBTQ advisory Board.

The Foster Care Alumni Association trained them to do elevator speeches, discussed legislative agendas re: suggestion boxes, immediate access to benefits, i.e. LINK, Medicaid, etc.

They are reviewing foster parent training and providing input.

The SYAB will meet again in May.

PRIDE Training

Veronica Sanchez

Veronica reported that training is available online and in the classroom. The Digital PRIDE contract ended March 31. Our own online version started April 1. Online is not going away. We are in the process of revamping and revising curriculum. Veronica invited SWFAC members to participate in the review workgroup. They are currently contracting out for Spanish translations and will hire Spanish curriculum developers. Everything available in English will be available in Spanish. They have enrolled 10,281 Preservice PRIDE training participants this calendar year, 1253 online, and 928 classroom. They show a 68% completion rate in the classroom and 76% completion rate online. They do not currently have data regarding the number that finalize licensure. Veronica needs input from the SWFCAC Training Committee. Council members requested additional in-service training. They're requested links to The Children's Bureau to try to add access to their training for Illinois caregivers. Our classroom participants have increased, especially in Southern Region. Licensing should screen applicants because not everyone is tech-savvy.

Discussion:

Do research regarding the licensing lag, training, and foster parent support by training category, in-person and online.

We need to bring back the in-person roundtable to share real life illustrations at the end of training.

Immersion Sites**Norma Machay**

Norma is becoming a coach for Child & Family Team meetings and has been involved in meetings with foster parent participants because of co-parenting. They are working on 40 positive changes. They are reviewing forms, combining to minimize redundancy. Stakeholder input is influencing outcomes. They have had some wins. CANS 2.0 is a win with people who complete five scans. They have written the policy guide and it will be reviewed. 900+ workers have been trained and have passed.

FY20 Caregiver Conference**Gwenn Eyer**

Gwenn polled the council to see whether they wanted to be involved in putting together a proposal for a caregiver conference in FY20. The council agreed that it should be a priority and will work on drafting a proposal at future meetings.

Stakeholder Comment – None

Public Comment

MOTION: *Rachel made the motion to table the Committee Reports. Stephanie seconded and the motion carried.*

MOTION: *Leslie made the motion to adjourn. Maya seconded and the meeting adjourned at 3pm.*

Next meeting: May 10, 2019, Northfield Inn & Suites, Springfield, Illinois.